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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this investigation were (1) to identify functional informal school-community relations programs in the 73 largest U.S. school districts, and (2) to provide information for educators wishing to organize similar programs. Data from questionnaires sent to the 73 districts revealed that 20 districts had informal school-community relations programs and that two-thirds of the 63 districts reporting made use of community advisory committees. It was also ascertained that the four most important responsibilities of community relations personnel were (1) collecting concerns of community members, (2) reporting to community members, (3) preparing inservice training for school staff, and (4) counseling with parents. (Author/MLF)

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AN INVESTIGATION OF INFORMAL SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS PROGRAMS IN MAJOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

by George T. Frey

As revealed by Moffitt (5), Levine (4), and Rice (7), educators have been reluctant to extend meaningful school-community relations into the communities they serve--maintaining the status quo has been the trend. Nussell (6) indicated that educators functioning in leadership roles have been content to satisfy their immediate superiors and a few select power groups that are extremely influential in the community. Because of this type of political maneuvering, educators have failed to meet the unique needs of certain American sub-groups and the needs of communities which have changed socially and economically because of their transient character and/or the thrust of technological advances.

The status of school-community relations may remained static as inferred by Frey (1) and this trend may continue into the future, as hypothesized by Green (3), unless the polity of school bureaucracies is affected by the community.

The resistance to change to more functional school-community relations has brought the present question to mind: "If there is a need for change in school-community relations, how can it best be implemented with a minimum of disruption of the educational process?" Pondering the above question motivated the writer to pursue the topic of this paper which hinges on informal school-community relations. By Frey's (1) definition "informal school-community relations" means those community relations efforts which emanate from local school sites (decentralized) for the purpose of involving the community in school activities. Such a program is coordinated by a staff

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person, other than the principal, who works full-time or part-time at the task. The basic objective of the concept is that involvement shall be reciprocal--community must be meaningfully involved.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

A research of selected literature revealed that functional informal school-community relations programs--both centralized and decentralized--have been almost non-existent throughout the Nation. The information researched was mostly descriptive and provided information on very few programs. Because the writer has been involved in a formalized informal school-community relations program for more than two years, it was his purpose to pursue a more difinitive study of the status of such programs.

One of the major objectives of this investigation was to identify informal school-community relations programs which were functional in the seventy-three largest school districts throughout the Nation. Another objective was to secure and analyze data for the purpose of extablishing much needed information for educators wishing to organize and administrate informal school-community relations programs.

PROCEDURE FOR COLLECTING DATA

In preparing to study the school-community relations programs of individual school districts, it was necessary to decide which districts to examine. The Research Division of the San Diego Unified School District provided the writer with a copy of the Houston Report. The Report contained a listing of the seventy-three major school districts throughout the Nation for the school year 1969-70. Information given relative to the

individual districts was:(1) school enrollment for the year 1969-70, (2) estimated city population for the fall of 1969, (3) the name of superintendent and director or head of research, and (4) district office addresses (see appendix).

Using the above information, on two different occasions a letter and questionnaire was mailed to each of the districts concerned. The first letter and questionnaire was mailed to directors of research on April 13, 1970. Since a small response had occurred by May 4, 1970, a follow-up letter and questionnaire was mailed on May 5, 1970. The follow-up letter was mailed to districts that did not respond to the first mailing.

For the return information, a self-addressed stamped envelope was enclosed on both mailing occasions. The letters of transmittal and a copy of the questionnaire can be found in the appendix.

REVIEW OF THE DATA

After examining responses to the questionnaire, requesting information regarding the status of secondary informal school-community relations, it was decided to discuss the findings under the following categories: (1) response to the questionnaire, (2) districts' support of school-community relations, (3) personnel involved in school-community relations programs--their duties and responsibilities.

Response to the questionnaire. After two mailings, 86.3% (sixty-three of seventy-three) of the questionnaires mailed were returned. A period of 68 days elapsed between the date of the first mailing and the

date of receipt of the last letter included in this study. The writer felt that the above return provided enough information to conclude a valid stucy of the topic.

Districts' support of informal school-community relations. Out of the districts reporting 31.7% (twenty of sixty-three) had formalized "informal school-community relations programs" as defined in this paper. Districts with populations of more than 100,000 pupils lead with a 40.9% incidence of programs, followed by districts having between 60,000 and 99,999 pupils (29.6%). Districts with less than 60,000 pupils revealed a program contingency of 21.4%. See Table 1. A larger sampling of districts may have shown different results although the writer suspected that larger districts, because of inner city problems, must pursue more avidly informal school-community relations activities. The larger districts indicated more linkages to federal funds which could also be a factor in the program trend.

With the exceptions of Long Beach, Miami and Oakland (did not report numbers), the number of secondary schools in districts was 445, while the number of secondary schools in programs was 307. New York did not report on junior high schools. Excluding the above exceptions, 68.9% of the schools in all districts have programs which seemed to be a significant number. The range of participation (secondary schools within a district involved), is from 12.5% (Tucson) to 100.0% (Columbus, Denver, Indianapolis, Jacksonville and Oklahoma City). A high percentage participation should indicate that districts are backing the programs since federal funds could not be so widely distributed. See Table 2.

TABLE 1-STATUS OF INFORMAL SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS PROGRAMS, 1969-70

	School Systems by Enrollment			Total all Systems Reporting
	100,000 or more	60,000 to 99,999	less than 60,000	
Districts with programs	40.9%	29.6%	21.4%	31.7%
Number Reporting	22	27	14	63

TABLE 2. THE SUPPORT OF INFORMAL SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN TWENTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS--1969-70

DISTRICT	Secondary Schools		Program		Funding		Hours of Operation			Comm. ADV. Committee.
	in Dist.	in Prog.	De-Centr.	Centr	Dist.	Fed.	Day	Eve	Wk-end	
Buffalo	14	6	x	x	x	...	x	...	...	x
Columbus	48	48	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	...
Dayton	11	10	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Denver	26	26	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Detroit	74	31	x	x	x	x	x	x	...	x
Fresno	6	2	...	...	x	...	x	x	x	...
Indianapolis	11	11	x	...	x	...	x	...	...	...
Jacksonville	36	36	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	...
Kansas City	11	9	x	x	x	...	x	x	x	...
Long Beach	...	5	x	...	x	x	x	x	x	x
Miami	...	21	x	...	x	*	x	x	x	x
Minneapolis	26	13	x	x	x	x	x	x	...	x
Oakland	...	...	...	...	x	x	...	...	...	x
Oklahoma City	23	23	x	x	x	...	x	...	x	x
New York	22	22	x	...	x	...	x	x	...	x
Philadelphia	52	38	x	...	...	x	x	x	x	x
San Diego	33	6	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Seattle	30	17	x	...	x	*	x	x	x	...
Tampa	14	8	x	x	...	x	x	x	...	x
Tucson	8	1	x	...	x	...	x	x	...	...
Totals	445	333	18	11	18	11	19	16	12	13

* Seattle also uses Special State funds in Urban areas.
* Miami has a tax assessment on unincorporated areas.

In reviewing Table 2 , the lack of information for Oakland could be questioned. Oakland did not respond to the questionnaire but did establish, in brochures sent, enough information to indicate that it has an informal school-community relations program as defined in this study.

Seven districts reported that the program was under the administration of principals while eleven districts reported that both the principal and a central office administrator shared in the supervision responsibility.

The data indicated that 45% of the districts have programs that were district funded, 10% that were federally funded, and 45% that were both district and federally funded. Seattle reported that a special state fund was used for community relations programs serving the urban disadvantaged. Datum from Miami showed that tax assessments on areas not coterminous with the district(unincorporated or county areas) were used to pay $5,000 of the directors' yearly salary--all other expenses were paid by the school district except small amounts raised for special purposes at any specific school site. See Table 2.

Nineteen of the 20 districts with informal school-community relations programs indicated operation during regular school hours. Sixteen of the districts disclosed that community relations personnel often worked during the evening hours and twelve districts disclosed that weekends were also utilized. It was specified by 65.0% of the districts, that community advisory committees were used, at the local school sites, to exchange information with school personnel or to act as advisory bodies.

Personnel involved in school-community relations. With the excep-

tion of two school districts, the titles assigned persons responsible for community relations at the site level were quite diversified as revealed in Table 3. Certificated personnel were reported used in 80.0% of the districts, non-certificated personnel in 15.0% of the districts, and a combination of certificated and non-certificated personnel in 5.0% of the districts. Written qualifications were reported required in 55.0% of the districts for both certificated and non-certificated personnel. Some of the qualifications were:

Education
1. Master degree in education.
2. AB degree in education.
3. Elementary, secondary, counseling and/or administrative credentials.
4. High school education.

Experience
1. Teaching experience and/or living in the target area.
2. Counseling, sociology and psychology.
3. Community leader.
4. Community member.

Where non-certificated personnel were used, there was heavy reliance on the persons experience in the community as a leader type, as well as, the length of time that the person had lived in the community.

Men were reported utilized in 90.0% of the districts, and women were reported used in 60.0% of the districts. While men served in more districts, the total number of female personnel exceeded male. The ratio was 225:388--men to women respectively. The large number of non-certificated females utilized in Philadelphia affected the ratio greatly--revealed in Table 3. Personnel were reported working on a full time basis in 60.0% of the districts, on a part-time basis in 15.0% of the districts and on both a full-time and part-time basis in 25.0% of the

TABLE 3. THE PERSONNEL STATUS OF INFORMAL SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN 20 SCHOOL DISTRICTS

DISTRICT	Cert.	Non-Cert.	Written Qual.	Sex		Work Hrs.		PERSONNEL TITLES
				M	F	Full	Part	
Buffalo	x	...	x	1	1	x	...	Home-School Coordinator
Columbus	x	...	...	35	13	x	x	Home-School-Community Agent
Dayton	x	...	x	3	3	x	...	Coordinator for School-Community Relations
Denver	x	...	x	3	1	x	...	Executive Director
Detroit	x	...	x	13	1	x	x	School-Community Agent
	...	x		2	34			School-Community Assistant
Fresno	...	x	x	2	...	x	...	Home-School Liaison
Indianapolis	x	...	...	2	9	...	x	Publications Director
Jacksonville	...	...	x	20	4	x	x	Community-School Coordinator
	x	...						School-Community Specialist
Kansas City	x	...	x	4	...	x	...	School-Community Agent
Long Beach	x	...	x	1	...	...	x	Teacher-Advisor
Miami	x	...	...	21	...	x	...	Community School Director
Minneapolis	x	...	x	57	10	...	x	Coordinator of Community Education
Oklahoma City	x	...	...	...	1	x	...	Coordinator of Volunteers
New York	x	...	...	22	...	x	...	Coordinator of Student Affairs
Philadelphia	...	x	...	7	225	x	...	School-Community Coordinator
San Diego	x	...	...	6	...	x	...	Community Relations Advisor
Seattle	...	x		...	2	x	x	Community Involvement Specialist
	...	x	x	23	77			Coordinator of Community Liaison Services
Tampa	x	...	x	1	7	x	...	Center Coordinator
Tucson	x	...	...	2	...	x	...	School-Community Liaison

districts.

Districts responded to a check list of "specific" primary and secondary responsibilities--see Table 4. The collective responses were ranked in an order of magnitude. The central tendency value (median) for specific duties in districts with informal school-community relations programs was 8. It would seem, therefore--considering only those responses above the median--that items b, a, e, d and f, respectively were thought most important.

Districts were then asked to rank what was felt the three "most important" items (see Table 4) from the primary and secondary responsibilities' list. The median value was 3. Considering values above 3, items b, a, d, and f respectively were thought most important. There was a similarity in response to "specific" and "most important" responsibilities. The writer therefore surmised that items b, a, d, f and e, in that order were the most important responsibilities.

Districts with centralized (formal) public relations programs did respond to the questionnaire. A comparison was made between what administrators of formal (centralized) programs thought to be most important as opposed to what administrators of informal (decentralized) programs thought to be most important. A similarity existed, as is revealed in Table IV.

Respondees listed several items which were thought to be important duties which were not listed on the questionnaire. Those items were:

1. Mediating interracial tensions.
2. Involving parents in school activities.

TABLE 4. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS PERSONNEL

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	Informal Programs		Formal Programs	
	Spec. Duties	Most Import.	Spec. Duties	Most Import.
PRIMARY				
a. Reporting to community members	14	9	18	11
b. Collecting concerns of community members	16	11	23	10
c. Publicizing federal and other special projects	7		10	3
d. Inservice training for school staff	12	6	12	12
e. Coordinating Special events' programs	14	3	12	4
f. Counseling with parents	12	5	9	13
g. Community newsletter	7		8	11
h. Orientation for new teachers	8	2	6	1
SECONDARY				
i. Press, radio and T.V. releases	8	1	5	4
j. Writing news articles.	8	2	12	2
k. Community Support for bond and tax elections	8		8	2
l. Collecting evaluation data	7	1	7	1

3. Counseling with students.
4. Serving as interpreter for bilingual families.
5. Accompanying teachers on study trips.
6. Encouraging youth councils.
7. Coordinating community agency activities.

Had the above responses been included on the questionnaire, perhaps a different response to the most important responsibilities would have occurred.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This investigation possibly established a base for future studies of school-community relations programs. Out of the information examined only 20 of 63 districts had programs by definition. The information and data furnished by the 20 districts that reported programs, provided the investigator with enough information to draw the following conclusions:

1. Large school districts were more apt to have informal school-community relations programs than small districts.

2. The range of participation (by district) of secondary schools involved in school-community relations programs was from 12.5% to 100.0%. A high percentage of participation may have indicated that districts are backing the programs since federal funds could not be so widely distributed and be effective.

3. There was a tendency for programs to be under the administration of both a school principal and a central office administrator.

4. Program operation was during regular school hours for 95.0% of the districts with programs, although many districts required that personnel work during the evening or on weekends.

5. Two-thirds of the districts with programs reported the use of community advisory committees.

6. Titles assigned personnel coordinating programs differed with the exception of two districts.

7. Certificated personnel were used to head programs more than non-certificated personnel and more than half of the districts required written qualifications.

8. More districts used men to head programs than women.

9. The four most important responsibilities of community relations personnel were (1) collecting concerns of community members, (2) reporting to community members, (3) inservice training of school staff, and (4) counseling with parents.

Although much was pointed out by the study, broader research could be done to determine a more valid National picture of informal school-community relations. In addition, comprehensive research and more in-depth studies could be done to determine the effects of community involvement on both the school and the community.

A refinement of the tool (questionnaire) used to collect the data may also be helpful.

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APPENDIX

A

SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS
EXTENDED DAY CENTER
150 SOUTH 30TH STREET
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92113

April 13, 1970

Dr. Anton Thompson
Director of Research Department
Long Beach School District
701 Locust Avenue
Long Beach, California 90813

Dear Dr. Thompson:

I am coordinator of school-community relations in the San Diego City Schools (Secondary Division).

The attached survey is being forwarded to the largest 72 school districts in the nation. The purpose of the inquiry is to determine the status of informal school-community relations at the secondary level.

I would sincerely appreciate your forwarding this survey to the appropriate personnel and having them promptly return the completed form in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Should you desire a copy of the survey results, please indicate on the last page of the attached questionnaire. Thanks very much for your time and effort.

Yours truly,

GEORGE T. FREY
Coordinator, School-Community Relations
Administrator, Extended Day Center

GTF:pw
Attachment

B

SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS
EXTENDED DAY CENTER
150 SOUTH 49TH STREET
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92113

May 5, 1970

Dr. Howard O. Merriman
Director of Research
Columbus School District
270 East State Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Mr. Merriman:

Recently, I forwarded a letter and questionnaire to your office concerning a survey that I am conducting. The purpose of the inquiry was to determine the status of informal school-community relations at the secondary level.

I am enclosing a second questionnaire as a reminder, with the hope that I can get a response as soon as possible. I sincerely appreciate your cooperation. If you have responded to my questionnaire, please accept my apology.

Yours truly,

GEORGE T. FREY
Coordinator, School-Community Relations
Administrator, Extended Day Center

GTF:dp
Encl.

STATUS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

DEFINITION--In this questionnaire informal school-community relations shall mean those programs which emanate from local school sites for the purpose of involving community (parents and organizations) in school activities. The program must be under the coordination of a staff person, other than the principal, who works full-time or part-time at the task.

1) Does your District have an "informal school-community relations" program? Yes _____ No _____

2) How many schools (secondary) are in your District? _____

3) How many of the schools are included in the "program?" _____

4) Is the person responsible for the program certificated? _____ non-certificated? _____

5) What is his(her) specific job title? _____

6) How many men are working in the position? _____ Women? _____

7) Is this person directly responsible to the principal? _____ to a central office administrator? _____

8) Do you have written qualifications for the position? Yes ____ No _____
If your answer is yes, respond to the following:

Master's degree _____ Area (Education, counseling, etc.) _____

AB degree _____ Area _____

Teaching experience (number of years) _____

Community member _____

Other _____

9) Are the positions full-time? _____ part-time? _____

10) Is the working time during the regular school day? _____ evening? _____ a combination of both? _____

Is the person frequently required to work week-ends? Yes ____ No _____

11) Does the community relations person have a community advisory body which meets regularly? Yes _____ No _____

12) Is the program District funded? _____ Federally funded? _____ funded by both? _____

Funded by another organization? _____ Specify _____

_____

Duties and responsibilities (check the items which apply):

Primary responsibilities:

_____ a) Reporting to community members.
_____ b) Collecting concerns of community members (assessment of public attitudes).
_____ c) Publicity on federal and other special projects.
_____ d) In-service training for the teaching, counseling, and administrative staffs relative to school-community relations.
_____ e) Coordinating special events' programs.
_____ f) Counseling with parents.
_____ g) Community newsletter
_____ h) Orientation for new teachers.

Secondary responsibilities:

_____ i) Press, radio and T. V. contacts.
_____ j) Writing news articles.
_____ k) Community support for bond and tax elections.
_____ l) Collecting evaluation data.

Other duties and responsibilities:

_____ m)
_____ n)
_____ o)

Rank the three items above which you feel as being the most important tasks of the community relations person. Indicate by letter a, b, c, etc.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

I would appreciate any additional thoughts related to your school-community relations program.

****

Please forward a summary of your findings to:

Name _____ Title _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____